

1997 Hall of Fame Inductee

Clarence H. Bonsack

Clarence H. Bonsack was the State FFA Executive Secretary from 1938 to 1965, a span of 27 years. During this time, FFA membership grew to over 15,000 members. Clarence was born and raised on a La Crosse County Dairy Farm. He graduated from Onalaska High School and earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture Education from UW-Madison in 1923. After 12 years of teaching, he returned to U.W- Madison for graduate work and a Master's Degree in 1936.

His first ag teaching position was at Ithaca High School and then at Oregon High School. In 1938, Clarence joined the staff of the State Board of Vocational Technical and Adult Education, a position he held for 27 years.

Clarence was a man of great vision and leadership. As State FFA Executive Secretary, he provided strong leadership to the development of the state FFA Camp at Jag Lake and contributed many hours of personal time to equip the camp for group use. Countless FFA members have benefited from this facility, which has provided educational opportunities in conservation and resource management, leadership training, and wholesome recreation to chapters throughout the state.

Clarence Bonsack received many honors from agricultural organizations in recognition of his innovative leadership. To the many who know him, he was Mr. FFA in Wisconsin for 27 years. Clarence died July 24, 1989 at age 89 in a retirement home in Indiana, but his heart was always in Wisconsin. He and his wife Myrtle, who preceded him in death, had three children -- a son, Richard, a son Alan, and a daughter Nina Brandt.